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SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Organization of Front Troop Control
From Posts Designated to Replace the Primary Command Post

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The Organization of Front Troop Control from Posts
Designated to Replace the Primary Command Post

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The problems set forth in General-Mayor N. Reut's article* are very timely and are of theoretical and practical significance. While sharing fully the point of view he expressed, we would like, based on the experience of exercises and the results of military-scientific research, to refine or amplify some of his proposals.

In our opinion, in order to resolve correctly the problem of replacing the front command post by another control post, we should proceed on the basis of the objective capabilities of the latter to fulfil, to the extent necessary and for an extended period of time, those tasks for which a front command post is responsible. The principal criterion is the minimum quantity of forces and means which will ensure adequately reliable control. And this is conditioned by the nature and extent of the principal tasks which have to be accomplished with the help of the various types of specialists located at the control post.

We shall examine, by way of illustration, the dominant trend in the activity of the officers of the front headquarters operations directorate and of the officers of the rocket troops and artillery staff regarding troop control, and then we shall determine the minimum number of personnel for a control post.

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*Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought", 1968, No. 1
(83).

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The following are among the principal tasks performed by operations officers: collecting data and analyzing the operational situation; making operational-tactical calculations for the front troop commander to use in making a decision; planning combat actions; making the tasks known to the troops; monitoring the fulfilment of tasks; informing subordinates; and presenting reports and summaries to the General Staff.

Axis officers, for the most part, are the ones who collect data, analyze the situation, and convey the combat tasks to the troops. Ordinarily one or two axis officers are appointed for each army. But since this appointment is not "stable" (at present, operations officers are required to prepare themselves to fulfil duties which are varied in scope and content), some of the axis officers can carry out other tasks. In this case, it will obviously be necessary to allocate a single axis for two or three armies. Here, two or three operations officers will be required and, in addition, one officer for the large units and units subordinate to the front. In individual cases a joint axis is allocated to the front ground forces (combined-arms formations and large units).

When a front has four or five armies, a minimum of 7 to 10 officers are needed to staff the axes. In addition, two operations officers are needed to draw up the decision, to plan and prepare various types of calculations, and to work out the plan of the operation; two officers are needed to maintain the situation map continuously; and one officer is needed to prepare data for the employment of missile/nuclear weapons and another to maintain the radiation situation map. At least two officers are needed to process the information, to collate the experience of combat actions, and to submit reports and other documents to the General Staff.

In all, it is advisable to have a minimum of 18 to 20 operations officers, if the control post is to be capable of directing the front troops.

As for rocket and artillery officers, their primary task is to ensure the timely delivery of nuclear strikes by rocket large units and units. A control group is usually set up for this purpose. This control group continuously receives data about the objectives to be destroyed, determines their coordinates, conveys the tasks to the large units and units, checks on the fulfilment of tasks, and maintains the situation map on the rocket troops and artillery, strike objectives, and other elements of the situation. Two shifts are established in this group, each having at least three officers (two operations and one intelligence). In addition, 3 or 4 officers are required to plan the combat employment of rocket troops and

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artillery, to collect data on the situation, and to perform calculations; and one or two officers are required to keep a record of the availability, receipt, expenditure, and loss of nuclear munitions and missiles. Consequently, a minimum of 10 to 12 rocket officers are required.

The experience of exercises has shown that if we take into account only the dominant trends in the activity of the various categories of specialists in front troop control, then the minimum complement of the post designated to replace the front command post must include 18 to 20 operations officers, 10 to 12 rocket and artillery officers, 11 to 13 intelligence officers (of these, 1 or 2 are field reconnaissance officers, 1 is an aerial reconnaissance officer, 2 are officers for agent information collection, 2 are briefing officers, 2 are radiotechnical intelligence officers, and 3 or 4 are in the command post complement), 11 to 13 air defense officers (2 officers for the combat use of surface-to-air missile units and fighter aircraft, 2 officers for radiotechnical troops and communications means, 1 officer for rocket-technical support, no less than 4 or 5 officers in the complement of the air defense command post, and 2 or 3 officers from the air army and a formation or large unit of the Air Defense Troops of the Country), 10 to 12 communications officers, and 2 or 3 officers each from the engineer and chemical troops. Apart from this, it is necessary to have at this control post 2 or 3 officers from the rear services headquarters and a group of 10 or 12 officers from other directorates and departments of the front headquarters (political officers, cipher officers, topographic officers, motor vehicle officers, tank officers, etc.). In total, the complement of this control post requires 76 to 91 officers and generals, not counting servicing personnel.

Of course, the most important factor, which determines the capability of exercising control from this post, is to have it equipped with an adequate amount of communications forces and means. In our opinion, this corresponds to approximately one communications battalion from the complement of the communications regiment of the front command post.

It should be concluded from the aforementioned that any control post which assumes the function of a front command post must be similar in composition to the control post we have cited or else differ from it only negligibly.

To what degree are these requirements met by existing control posts to which the author of the article contemplates transferring troop control in case the front command post goes out of action?

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First of all, let us examine the capabilities of the forward command post. Two parts can be conventionally singled out in it: the "permanent" complement, which is located at the forward command post from the beginning to the end of the operation; and the "temporary" one, which comes to the forward command post with the front troop commander. The "permanent" part, because of its limited personnel (20 to 30 men, and moreover, not always highly skilled), is only capable of collecting data, analyzing the situation, and maintaining the map. The principal work is accomplished by the officer personnel who come in together with the front troop commander. And since these will be new personnel each time, they will have to become engaged in troop control "from the march". All of this will undoubtedly hinder establishing the required contact within short periods of time with the "permanent" part of the forward command post and will adversely affect troop control from the forward command post in case the command post goes out of action.

To ensure that the forward command post is constantly ready to replace the front command post, it seems advisable to us that the forward command post should always have those forces and means which are capable of successfully accomplishing this task, i.e., approximately the amount which we have cited above.

The capabilities of one of the army command posts to replace the front command post are also limited by a shortage of operations officers, intelligence officers, and other specialists. Therefore, it is necessary to considerably increase the number of these specialists if the command post of one of these armies is to successfully replace the front command post. In that case, the complement of this army command post must obviously be somewhat larger than that of the control post recommended by us. It will have to accomplish a double task: simultaneously to control front troops, and also the large units and units of its own army.

As regards the capabilities of the rear services control post of the front, this post, as is well known, does not have the necessary specialists for troop control, except for those officers of the combat arms and services involved exclusively in supply matters. To reinforce this post in a timely manner will also be impossible, since a considerable portion of the forces and means will be allocated primarily to the front forward command post and to the command post of one of the armies designated to replace the front command post. A rear services control post was set up for exercises, but it could replace the command post only in exceptional cases: when it was not possible to transfer control to any one

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designated posts and when there were forces and means available to reinforce the rear services control post.

Of course, to completely resolve the problem of the continuity of front troop control it is necessary to introduce some changes in the T/O and E structure. In our opinion, it is advisable to create within the field headquarters of the front two equivalent headquarters, the front headquarters and the rear services headquarters (the 1st and 2nd headquarters--control posts) each with officer specialists in sufficient numbers to ensure the accomplishment of all tasks pertaining to troop control. This has been discussed more than once in the pages of the military press.

We are in agreement with the author's suggestion that to restore a command post, a forward command post, and other posts which have been put out of action, and also to reinforce control posts designated to replace the front command post with forces and means, it has indeed become imperative to create a reserve command -- a reserve command post. The availability in a front of several control posts and reserve commands of approximately equal capabilities will help ensure continuous troop control.

At the same time, the assertion by the author of the article that the command post of the air army is capable of replacing the front command post raises some doubts. Judging by its function, the inherent characteristics of its T/O and E structure, and its technical equipment, the air army command post can effect direction only over aviation.

There is not a single organ in the complement of the field control of a front air army that is capable of controlling ground forces. Assuming that operations officers, intelligence officers, and the chief of chemical services might to some degree solve individual general problems, there still is no one to solve the vitally important problems of directing rocket troops and artillery, engineer troops, and other troops. The complement of the air army contains no specialists for activities which are even related or similar in nature to these. We must also keep in mind that, in general, there is a very limited number of officers and generals in the complement of an air army command post.

The air army command post also does not have at its disposal the required communications means to control ground forces; it does not even have enough shortwave radio sets to carry out its primary air missions, and the ultra-shortwave radio sets, because of their tactical-technical

characteristics, cannot maintain communications with ground forces radio sets of similar types.

The fact that the air army commander knows the concept of the operation and that there is in his command post a map of the situation in the zone of the front, still does not give him a special advantage (as the author asserts) in front troop control, since in actuality the concept of the front operation is also known to those commanders of combined-arms (tank) armies whose command posts have been designated to replace the front command post. The map at the air army command post primarily depicts the situation in support of aviation. It usually does not have important details of the situation (the disposition of rocket troops, rocket-technical units, artillery groupings, second echelons and reserves, and engineer, chemical and rear services units), without which successful troop control is impossible.

Thus, in order for the air army command post to be able to successfully replace the front command post (as General-Mayor N. Reut asserts), we are convinced it will be necessary to supplement its complement with a large quantity of forces and means, to modify the T/O and E structure of the command post, and to reorganize the entire training of aviation officers so that they acquire the necessary knowledge of combined-arms matters. These measures, in all probability, are not justified if only because the additional forces and means in the air army command post will be used sporadically: when not a single one of the combined-arms control posts is able to replace the front command post. The rest of the time they will be doomed to inaction. Moreover, the presence of a large amount of forces and means will make the air army command post cumbersome and less maneuverable.

* * * *

The questions examined by General-Mayor N. Reut are extremely important for the correct and timely solution of the problem of increasing the effectiveness of front troop control in a nuclear war. Particular attention should be devoted to the preparation of control posts designated to replace front command posts, and to providing them with the forces and means to enable them to successfully fulfil the basic tasks of control in the most critical of situations in which a front may find itself.

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It should be mentioned that the complement of a present-day forward command post, which is the first in line to replace the command post, does not fully satisfy the requirements of this role. We know from the experience of exercises that the 25 to 30 officers and generals who are permanently located at the forward command post are not really able to control the front troops even for a brief period of time.

The complement of the forward command post (approximately 40 to 45 officers and generals) proposed by the author of the article likewise does not fully solve this problem. A forward command post with such a complement has only 6 or 7 operations directorate officers, of which 2 maintain the situation map and 4 or 5 will carry out the duties of axis officers. In addition, they must also keep a check on troop actions. As is evident, there is practically no one left to plan combat actions, draw up combat orders and instructions, or brief the echelons concerned. The situation is similar in the case of intelligence officers and rocket troops and artillery staff officers when they are carrying out their functions pertaining to troop control.

As has been corroborated by the experience of exercises and war games, in order for a forward command post to replace the front command post it must have at least 75 to 80 generals and officers, of which 12 to 14 are operations officers (6 or 7 axis officers, 4 or 5 men in the plans and situation posting group, and 2 briefing officers), 8 to 10 are intelligence officers, up to 10 are rocket troops and artillery staff officers, 6 to 8 are officers from the chief of air defense troops, 8 to 10 are officers from the communications directorate, and 20 to 24 officers are from other services.

The communications battalion of the forward command post is not able to provide all of the communications channels which before this were operating from the command post, even if it were possible to hand over to it those communications means which have remained intact. In our opinion, a drastic solution of this problem would be to create uniform communications battalions for the front command post and forward command post. In case both posts go out of action simultaneously, other measures will also have to be provided for.

We consider timely and correct the proposal made by the author of the article to create a front reserve command (reserve control post). Its availability will permit replacing front and army control posts put out of action, providing replacements to posts which have suffered heavy casualties, and using it as the basis for an auxiliary control post when

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conducting combat actions in a theater of military operations which has special physical-geographical factors. The composition of this reserve command might be similar to that which we have proposed for the forward command post, with an adequate amount of communications means.

General-Mayor N. Reut has assessed favorably the capability of the rear services control post to replace the front command post; however, at present there are no officers in the complement of the rear services control post who could solve problems of front troop control and, also, there is not an adequate amount of communications means.

Therefore, in our opinion, if in the future we contemplate transferring control from a front command post to its rear services control post, then it will be necessary for the complement of the rear services control post to have a permanent operations group of 20 to 25 officers, of which 10 will be operations officers (4 to maintain the situation map, 4 or 5 axis officers, and 1 or 2 briefing officers), 3 or 4 intelligence officers, 4 or 5 rocket (artillery) officers, and 4 or 5 air defense officers. If needed, engineer and chemical troop specialists can be drawn from officers of the arms of troops and services involved in logistics matters and who are permanently located at the rear services control post.

It is advisable to situate the operations group cited by us at least 5 kilometers from the main complement of the rear services control post. This group will maintain on maps the overall situation on a front scale and will study the situation in detail in the zone of each army. As soon as troop control is transferred to the rear services control post, it will be necessary to augment the operations group with officers from the services and from the headquarters of the rear services, and also with a some of the officers from the arms of troops and services located at the rear services control post. Only under these circumstances, in our opinion, will the rear services control post be able to accomplish temporarily the functions of the front command post.

A variant worth mentioning is the one in which the currently existing rear services control post is divided into two control organs, for example, into a rear services command post and a rear services control post. The rear services command post will have the deputy commander for rear services, the rear services headquarters, and the principal services of the rear services; and, also, the directorates of rocket-artillery armament, armored equipment, and motor transport equipment. The remaining directorates, departments, and services will remain at the rear services control post. Under these conditions, the rear services command post,

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jointly with the permanent operations group, will be able to control the troops for some time.

The problems under discussion here are also linked directly to measures ensuring the viability of control posts. Using the generally accepted dispersals for personnel and transport means at control posts, the following should be located at distances of 1.5 to 2 kilometers from one another: the formation commander's work site; the groups from the headquarters, from the arms of troops, and of political directorate officers; the rear services operations group; the support group; and others. Within these groups, in the interest of easing the work, and when forces and means are available to organize internal communications, the distances between departments and directorates should on the average amount to 200 to 300 meters; and between command-staff vehicles and other vehicles it should be 30 to 60 meters so that a single large caliber shell or aerial bomb does not simultaneously destroy two installations.

We must also take into consideration the increasing tendency to allocate separate control organs (for example, command posts for the front air defense and for the air defense of armies) and to situate them some distance from the principal elements of the command post. The need has also arisen to have an independent control post for the chief of intelligence. It is advisable to allocate it from the headquarters group and to locate it 5 to 6 kilometers from this group or from the formation commander's work site.

At present, based on the experience of exercises, it has become customary to deploy front command posts 80 to 100 kilometers away from the line of contact of the opposing sides or from the national border, and to deploy army command posts at a distance of 30 to 40 kilometers. Front forward command posts are deployed 30 to 50 kilometers away, and army forward command posts 10 to 15 kilometers away. Front rear services control posts are deployed 30 to 40 kilometers away, and army rear services control posts 10 to 15 kilometers away, from their corresponding command posts. We believe that such distances for front and army command posts and forward command posts do not fully meet the viability requirements for command posts: the forward command posts are located within range of enemy tactical nuclear means and the command posts are too near the first-echelon large units and too isolated from the air army, second echelons, and reserves.

We think that the principal control posts of a front or army (command post and forward command post) should be situated outside the range of

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enemy tactical nuclear means and at distances which ensure the best control of the main grouping of forces and means, which in an army are deployed at a depth of 100 to 150 kilometers and in a front at a depth of up to 500 kilometers. Thus, the army forward command post can be 20 to 30 kilometers from the line of contact of the opposing sides, the front forward command post 60 to 80 kilometers from this line, and the rear services control post 50 to 60 kilometers from the front command post. In the event two posts for the control of rear services are set up, the rear services command post can be located 20 to 30 kilometers from the front command post and the rear services control post 40 to 50 kilometers from the rear services command post. We must keep in mind that the farther away control posts are from the front line, the farther away they should be from each other, since then they might be destroyed by more powerful nuclear munitions.

To ensure continuous troop control, it is very important that control posts be moved in a timely manner. At the present time, the distance of moves can be considerably increased. The increasing capabilities of communications means, and the equipping of headquarters with more advanced and fast-moving transport means with increased protection against the means of mass destruction, permit (when the troops are advancing at a rate of 70 to 80 kilometers a day) a front command post to move 250 to 300 kilometers, i.e., to all intents and purposes once every 2 to 3 days, and the rear services control post to move once every 3 to 4 days. The front forward command post and the command posts and rear services control posts of the armies can move once a day, and sometimes once in two days to a depth of 80 to 100 kilometers.

When control posts remain in the same areas for a prolonged period of time, it increases the chances of their being detected by enemy reconnaissance. Therefore, control posts and communications centers should, in accordance with previously developed plans, periodically change their locations securely, within brief periods of time, and without losing communications with the troops.

We are convinced that the arguments cited by Comrade N. Reut concerning the possibilities of using the air army command post to replace the primary front command post have not been adequately thought out. In actuality, the air army command post does not have the specialists who could control rocket troops, and who would have the skills and experience to control combined-arms formations and large units, air defense means, and engineer troops. The majority of the officers of the operations and intelligence departments will be detailed to combined-arms armies and to the front command post for the purpose of controlling aviation.

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Furthermore, the control complement of the air army does not have the communications forces and means required to direct front troops.

Locating the air army command post near the front command post is not an advantage but, on the contrary, increases the probability of having both installations destroyed simultaneously, even when appropriate camouflage and protective measures are taken. The fact that the air army commander is a member of the Military Council of the front does not give him (as the author has asserted) a special natural advantage over other army commanders.

The command post of a front second echelon army possesses not lesser capabilities but, rather, greater capabilities, to control front troops than does the air army command post. In particular, combined-arms and tank army commanders have rocket large units and units and the necessary forces and means to control them, and they constantly coordinate the actions of these large units and units with the front means of destruction.

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